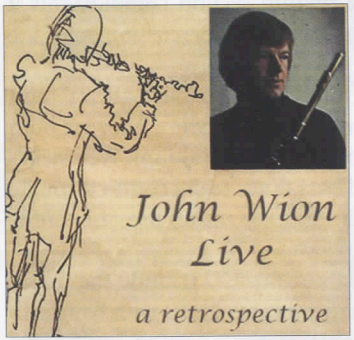

John Wion Live: A Retrospective—Recordings from 1957–1987

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In 2007, John Wion self-published his memoir, *Wood, Silver and Gold*, with lulu.com. He compiled the two-CD set *John Wion Live: A Retrospective* with the intention of providing a soundtrack to accompany the book. Whether you have read, intend to read, or do not intend to read the book, this compilation is worth considering as an addition to your collection.

Those whose ears can tolerate only the most pristine and technologically advanced recording quality may have a difficult time appreciating this collection. Because these recordings are taken from a variety of live performances and venues (radio broadcasts, boot-legged opera performances, recitals, recordings of his solos with a variety of orchestras, and chamber performances), the sound quality changes from one track to the next and is often a bit stuffy or muffled. However, Wion includes liner notes that describe the context for each performance, which adds interest and excitement in the listening experience.

For instance, we learn that there may be some inaccuracies in the radio broadcast performances due to the fact that the accompanying ensemble was sight-reading. It is also explained that the opera recordings came from audience members who covertly captured performances in an era when not everything was professionally preserved as it is today. In addition to the inherent energetic difference of a live performance, these are all "one-take" recordings, and when one listens with that in mind, Wion's remarkable, inspired performances become that much more so.

In addition to the energy of the set's spontaneous quality, another great feature is its variety of composers and styles. While Wion does not always include multi-movement works in their entirety (he includes all movements of the Lovelock Concerto simply because he feels it is a work deserving of more attention), he does show his versatility by placing opera solos next to works ranging from the "traditional" (including Sonata by Prokofiev, Ballade by Reinecke, Sonata BWV 1030 by J.S. Bach) to the avant-garde (including *Synchronisms #1* by Davidovsky, *Arcade 3b* by Humble, and others). (For a full listing, visit http://homepage.mac.com/johnwion/recordings.html.)

This compilation beautifully chronicles the highlights of an exceptional career and provides an impressive glimpse of flute performance in the second half of the 20th century. While you do not have to purchase his memoir to appreciate these recordings, you may be inspired to read more about Wion and his journey playing on a wooden, silver, and, finally, gold flute.

—Tess Miller